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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER

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TAKING the full scope indicated by the title of our paper, it certainly includes those classes of the public among whom there is a continued necessity for a supply of suggestions, of information and of that expression of ideas that has come to be known as "art." "Art," true art, not that of the "Wilde" Esthete, with disheveled hair, awry tie and hungry, trade-dollar eye, is certainly becoming a dominant feature of our every-day life, and how that part of the trades public to whom our paper is addressed, has been supplied with it, is easily told by their own experiences. Now, if we have a community, or a class, that deserve and desire good treatment at the hands of word-mongers and idea-vendors, and if that want is not properly filled, it goes without further argument that he who fills the gap should be successful; we think we have found such an unfilled want, and we propose to fill it, with good measure, heaped up, shaken down and running over. Our patrons may be certain that we are money-seekers, and hope to be money-makers, and may rely upon our assurance that we believe the royal road to fortune to be the one which is paved with good deeds, for good money, and not with good promises, badly kept.

WE do not propose to lose ourselves in the mazes of the "Theoretical," although Publishers, Writers and Lecturers are encouraged, by the moving passions of men, to cater to their carefully nurtured and ever growing idiosyncrasies, the theory of one as against the speculation of another. Theory is all powerful and absolutely necessary, but it is practice and workmanship that bring the inner workings of the mind to the level of our every-day life.

WE hope to be "Practical" by presenting original designs, by reproducing articles of recent manufacture, by calling attention to new thoughts in all lines in which our friends may be interested. We believe that if we can help our patrons to one suggestion, or one idea, that may perchance solve a wearisome riddle, our mission is well filled. And with this end in view, we shall make our work as varied as possible, believing that among the thousand and one wants, the desired idea may be found as well in one subject as another.

THE panel for mural decoration may easily be adapted to wood or metal, and contrariwise, and the pattern or design of leg or column, of post or rail, may be varied to either use, for chair, table, cabinet, bedstead or what not. The Eclectic character of modern furniture, and the present tendency toward a much decorated style, while serving to exhaust the ideas of the designer and the manufacturer, can well be reinforced by ideas and suggestions from all sources, and adaptations from decorations for all purposes.

THE Amateur has come to be a much heeded factor in the estimation of journals attempting to fill this field. So far as this term applies to those "art" crazed folk, who believe that two

hourly lessons twice a week for three weeks will convert them into finished decorators, we have no sympathy with the class; nor do we believe that the average "Amateur" with a few cents worth of colors, some scraps of artistically (?) selected rags, some cheap hangings, a few sticks, boxes or the like can furnish and decorate an apartment in such a way as to merit anything but very faint praise. Such productions are, in the majority of cases, the veriest parodies on "art" and good taste. On the other hand, there are many whose natural desires and natural abilities incline them to look, with loving and capable discrimination and artistic taste, for the beautiful in all things, and occasionally to vent their feelings by needle, brush or ruder tools. To such we commend our intended work; in it we believe they will find a fund of suggestions and ideas that cannot fail to be of special benefit to them.

WE shall be pleased to receive suggestions from all who may have the kindness to offer them. The *sensibilité* of the editor is, at times, both *maigre* and *grasse*; his complacency can be tickled with a straw, and his self-conceit is impervious to a harpoon. He possesses, and will be glad to exercise, the faculty of thanking all who may favor him, and he trusts that he has the ability to glean some good from all.

WE have no doubt we should say a few encouraging words concerning the state of business at this moment, the prospect for the future, and give a general weather chart, a kind of Vennor guess, at the chances of everybody getting rich in a very short time, and the time lasting long enough to permit everyone to do so. We have no doubt the healthy condition of business will continue, the opinion expressed by the daily and weekly papers point in this flattering direction, and we don't know that we have any grounds, or any disposition, to combat this prediction. We certainly hope our belief is not ill-founded, for we have ventured upon it almost unlimitedly, and, in common with everybody else, trust we may encounter nothing but good times—so far as the financial world is concerned. We are not disposed to think everything is going to ruin, because the country is not run upon a process patented by ourselves, and we have the confidence in its age and ability, to think it has profited by past panics, and will not encounter another. As we regard it, manufacturers, dealers, consumers have nothing but a promising outlook before them.

SPEAKING of good times reminds us that we want some first-class canvassers—some of the kind that can capture a subscription at sight. This seems to be a good opening for some regular lightning-rod purveyors.

OUR readers are requested to examine *every* page; it will be found that even the advertising pages, in the back, the part of a paper that is so often tabooed by the ordinary reader, contain many hints that will undoubtedly be suggestive and useful. This is one of our "new features."

ANOTHER "new feature" of this number is that every article is original, and written especially for us. There are many articles to be found in our exchanges that are too good to be let alone, however, and we propose to unearth many of them, giving them the benefit of our circulation; but in such instances we shall consider it a pleasant duty

to give the despoiled party full credit for his work. We realize the startling character of this journalistic innovation, but we hope our contemporaries will survive it—perhaps they may imitate it.

THE "craze" for artistic and antique furniture, for handsomely and uniquely decorated apartments, has made itself felt in the leading literature of the day, and we find pages of our most finished contemporaries occupied with well written and richly illustrated descriptions of modern interiors. The public unmistakably demands this sort of reading, and finds much in it to engage their attention and encourage their tastes.

MUCH space has been devoted by *The Century* to these subjects, and in the current number of *Harpers Monthly* is an admirably told story of the interiors of some well-known city houses. The plates, interspersed through this narrative, convey an excellent idea of the work described in the text, so far as they go.

BUT the fault we would find, and the only one, is that they do not pursue the idea to sufficient length, they leave one upon the edge of the hearth, staring off into nothingness, or a floor drops out of sight, leaving one arm of a chair or one leg of a sofa balanced upon the brink, whilst the rest of the furniture is supposed to have gone below.

WE have an inborn dislike to mutilate households in this manner, and we think it much more satisfactory to the householder to show his room as it is, entire, not as it would be if the greater part of the building were blown away. Taking this view of it, we had put, some weeks since, into our engraver's hands the parlor, of which *Harper* shows a corner, but delay in making the work entirely satisfactory to us, prevents publication of it until our next number. Then we shall show, not alone the excellent selection made by *Harper*, but the harmony of the whole apartment.

#### TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

PROBABLY no question of importance to the trades will excite so much interest during the next few years, as Technical Education.

The question as to its desirability and necessity undoubtedly arose from the new order of things, by which a child is expected to develop into the full grown adult in art, both fine and mechanical, without that thorough practical training through which our old-fashioned, slow-going ancestors were put. When the modern trades-unions, societies and associations of every description, entirely shut off the old-fashioned system of apprentices, and when the hurry and bustle of modern life demanded achievements of the child, that, but yesterday, were thought worthy work for the man, it was high time that some means should be sought by which the older training could be replaced; hence, "Technical Schools." Consequently we now see machine schools, fitted up with all the latest appliances of cunningly devised tools, in which the pupil may be taught the uses and capabilities of the shop; a year or two serving to turn out a fully instructed, scientific and competent mechanic, without, perhaps, having soiled one of his adjustable cuffs or spotted his immaculate shirt bosom. In olden days these accomplishments were learned by an "apprentice," who began at the shop floor, and gradually worked up from the science of sweeping (not an easy thing to master, either), through the various grades with sweat of brow and years of labor, until the mastery which belongs to manful exertion came to him. To be sure, this shop "education" may have turned out some men that belonged to the same class as the inventor, who couldn't draw a design or make a model of his invention, but who went off quietly and cut it out of a section of an apple, with his penknife; they may not have known the exact relation of a tangent to a curve, or a radius to a diameter, but they did know their business, practically, from bottom to top, and if they did not happen to have a technical knowledge of drawing, they could almost always make a design that would enable another mechanic, of the same school, to put the work into shape.

And in the fine arts, who ever, in our days, expects a would-be Raphael or Titian to enter the studio of some already well-known, capable artist, and by washing the brushes and palette, and patiently watching the methods of the full grown man, to gradually learn the art of subjecting the natural and undisciplined ideas to the practical processes of interpretation. The modern way to

fame would be through a few years tuition, at the hands of some technical educator, in the "Principles of Ornament," the "Theories of Color," and a few other such works by authors whose lives were probably spent in defending some pet theory, until they became perfectly blind to the beauties or possibilities of any system but their own.

Let it be acknowledged, at once, that the old methods of art and mechanical education are now practically obsolete; yet, the question may fairly be asked, whether the new methods are entirely sound and wise.

Is there not a tendency, and a growing one, on the part of every teacher to ignore the versatility of genius and of art, and to adopt and teach some particular "school" or "theory," until the unfortunate pupil is in danger of being graduated into a cast-iron aggregation of mechanical, geometrical or ornamental theorems, whose path through the world will be marked by either the friction of scientific roughness, or the isolation of scientific polish, rather than by the ease of the kindly and receptive disposition of one who sees some good in all things.

It depends upon the methods of Technical Schools, methods which must be fully developed within a very short time, whether we shall be surrounded by men and women, who are either like the stone, entirely unable to assimilate the advantages and the beauties of the moving life around them, or like the sponge, with ever one more space ready for the absorption of the experiences and the common sense with which they will come in contact—which shall it be?

Candidly appealing to the good judgment of all who may read this, we would ask; is there not a growing danger that the pupils of our modern "Technical Schools" will fall into the condition so graphically described by *Rabelais*: "Can there be any greater dotage in the world, than for one to 'guide and direct his courses by the sound of a 'bell, and not by his own judgment and discretion'?"

Would it not be an excellent idea to organize a NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TECHNICAL EDUCATORS, composed of equal numbers of teachers and manufacturers, so that the theoretical could be tempered, at least, by the practical, and thus avoid the danger that Technical Education shall become a mere quibbling of theory, in which shall disappear all practical results of the system.

This is not a pessimist's opinion of Technical Schools; it is not an opinion at all; neither is it a protest against the present system, but it is only a faint expression of feelings which we believe to be very common, and which will, we fear, be very loudly and disagreeably expressed, unless some radical changes are introduced into the possible tendencies of the present system.

#### HONESTY IN THE TRADES.

IN looking about for material for our first number, we solicited several of the larger producers of ornament and furniture to allow us to use some of their newest and finest designs, as illustrations of the present state of Decorative Art manufactures. It would not have been surprising if we had occasionally been answered that such a publication would be unwise, because of the danger that some manufacturers of cheaper goods would copy it, and place it upon the market, thus depreciating the value of the original design and goods; we found, however, that this opinion was much more widespread than we had supposed.

There undoubtedly is, in all lines of business, a certain proportion of dealers who make it part of their existence to filch other peoples ideas, and if possible their business. The newspapers, both foreign and domestic, are filled with reports of actions in patent, copyright, trade mark and design cases, some of which exhibit characteristics on the part of the offenders that should condemn them to the sternest reprobation of decent men, it is, therefore, not strange that the fear of these nefarious practices has become so common.

Is it not possible to find a remedy for this disease? or, if not an immediate cure, cannot something be done to mitigate the evil, and gradually to cause its disappearance? Suppose that as a corrective, at least, individuality of thought and action is made a part of the curriculum of our rapidly increasing Technical Schools. If the boy is taught that a design evolved by himself, out of his own consciousness and perfectly original, is the only work to which he should lend himself, will the proper principle not grow upon him and into his nature, until he will abhor the idea of plagiarism? This may seem like teaching morality, as well as technics, but surely it will be no loss to either, if both are taught together. Or, if the boy, thus taught, will inevitably evolve the man as nature cast him, honest or dishonest, without

regard to the education, is there not some way of reaching the man except by the slow and unsatisfactory processes of law?

Suppose that individuality of productions, and consequently of design, should be insisted upon by the trades? Suppose that when an evil-minded manufacturer should approach a dealer with the remark that he had for sale a new design, copied exactly from an expensive piece of goods just produced by Messrs. Highup & Co., he should be treated to a dose of what the Hibernian Magistrate called the "cast oirn toe of justice"—wouldn't such treatment be a speedy corrective?

When the consumer is told by the "average salesman" that this piece, offered at One dollar, is an exact copy of the design of Messrs. Getup & Co., which they sell at Five dollars, suppose that the salesman is quietly reminded that it is desired to deal with honest men, not with thieves—would it be a good remedy?

Such proceedings would exhibit very peculiar individuality, of course, but wouldn't they be effective? and under such treatment would not the dishonest designer and manufacturer be prompted to exercise that degree of originality, at least, with which all men are endowed to some extent, and thus by the production of new ideas and new articles, constantly add to the honesty of the trades, as well as to the comforts and the pleasures of our environment.

#### TRADES PAPERS.

What we understand to be the purpose of a "Trades Paper" may easily be gathered from the articles on the preceding page.

The collection of news items, of ideas, of suggestions, and of the hundred and one things that make a journal valuable, may fairly be said to be the common purpose of all who publish such papers, and such good intentions we have no desire to criticise. But allowing to all, by stretch of courtesy, an equal ability in Collating and Editing, we find a subject for most wholesome criticism in the methods of presenting the work; and the more particularly because, as the tastes, the instincts it might be said, of the class we desire to serve are necessarily of a very high order, it seems to us that the pabulum served to them should be of a correspondingly high degree. Imagine a dealer, a designer or manufacturer, with the art and harmony loving mind that must belong to any man who hopes to successfully work in the fields of decoration and furnishing, opening the pages of some of the so-called "Trades Papers," which it would, perhaps, be too invidious and too unkind for us to name. With what shock of nerves do the "Bill Poster" pages of advertisements greet him, and with what disdain must he note the slovenly and wretched typographical work, not equal, in some cases, to the commonest and cheapest hand bill or dodger, that he would, if he could bring himself to such methods, throw around the streets. We wonder that such horrible specimens of the printers "art"—heaven save the mark—should be suffered to exist, and considering the only excuse for their being, viz: the low advertising rates offered by them, it is remarkable that the gentlemen who support them do not properly estimate their value by their own treatment of the successive issues. What becomes of such trash?—are they ever read or even looked at, by those who keep them alive? The majority of those who patronize them may call to mind the homely conjunction of words, "cheap and nasty"—is it possible that the "cheapness" balances the other quality, and is it not self-evident that they are the dearest, because the most useless, mediums for advertisements. We address our remarks particularly to the "advertising" patronage of such papers, because if that was governed by the ordinary rules of business judgment, the papers would soon disappear. Who ever heard of a paying subscription list in connection with such?

If it is desired to know our ideas of what a "Trades Paper" should be, we would invite attention to *The American Architect*, *The Builder and Woodworker*, *The Carpet Trade and Review*, *The Sanitary Engineer*, *The American Silk Journal*, and *The Textile Monitor*; and, also, because in almost parallel lines, *The Art Amateur* and *The Art Interchange*. These papers are not "cheap"—they invite patronage with the understanding that the quality of matter and of work is commendable and creditable, and they worthily represent their various interests.

This first number is an earnest of our ideas as to what a Trades Paper should be; may we not hope that it will secure the co-operation of those who believe that the "Trades" are entitled to the best that skill of pen, pencil and mechanical means can produce.